



4 Tips to Build a Career That Lasts

Many individuals genuinely want to create a long-term and satisfactory career while developing their key behavioural competencies and technical skills, as well as knowledge to reach their goals. But to succeed in achieving a viable career, individuals must take ownership of their work life and the choices they make along the way. Support is always beneficial, but not always readily available and reliable. The following four helpful steps can lead a motivated individual down the right road to engaged and energised career growth.

1) Career Strategy

Without a framework or plan of approach to career development, an individual would not get very far. Too many distractions and unexpected challenges can block any movement forward. Career strategy is essential, based on employees' own awareness of what they can do, what they cannot do, and where they want to go. Knowing one's limitations, potential, and opportunities can become clearer through open and honest discussions with peers, supervisors, or mentors. Without a true assessment of the individual's personal skills and knowledge, there can be

no understanding of what the employee should do (proactive steps to take) to develop the talent that the company (and the individual's goals) require. Career strategy is the foundation for individual, as well as any career development programme, success. And above all, one needs to truly understand that luck will take a person just so far. A solid career strategy will take that individual much farther. After all, luck favours the person who is prepared.

2) Multi-Variied Skill Set and Experience

Balancing specialisation versus gaining broader experience is no easy choice and can be very challenging for many individuals. However, if it remains unbalanced, it can also lead to stagnation over time. While altering one's function or specialising in one aspect of a field is important, today's fast-moving talent competition is more amenable to individuals who can offer an employer broad knowledge and experience with top-notch specialisation.

Finding a match in a diverse company that spans a number of industries, geographic regions, and position offerings is one way to maneuver through different opportunities to



enhance one's skill level. Whatever steps are taken, make sure that they lead to the ultimate goal of having a broad array of experiences with a very solid set of specialisations. The future talent market will increasingly favour not the most-talented in one single area but the most-talented in multiple domains.

3) Discovering the Sustainable Energy Source

Finding one's true niche is a difficult and long process but talent that provides sustainable energy and motivation is key to building a career that will last. Without an adequate energy source, nothing moves forward. But the source of that energy should be sustainable—a source that does not fade over time, a source that actually recycles itself when fed with the right elements, and a source that is deep enough and wide enough so it does not perish quickly just when the person starts.

There is nothing more important than finding that energy source and ensuring that there is enough to begin. And remember, we all have to get used to changing careers, but the energy source remains true to the individual.

4) Exposure to, and Support of, Leadership

Having leadership support is essential to moving up the ladder or into attractive lateral positions. Just don't believe in fairy tales that say, "if you do what you like and work hard, you will get where you want to go." Although, with luck, that may happen, reality is such that without leadership support and exposure, a person will not go very far. So, it is critical that you select and only work for organisations in which leadership support or exposure is not a "special promotional event" but part of very normal daily business. Those companies that are run by leaders who are able to provide real career opportunities rather than very vague and unfocused career development programmes are the only working environments you should participate in for successful career progression.

What It All Means

Sitting idly back and expecting that the employer will see one's potential and offer the right steps forward is foolhardy. Many employers try to do their best to support career development, but fall short in nudging people into the right direction. They say employees—rather than the

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employer—should be in charge of their own careers, totally ignoring the implications of such an approach. Very few companies are likely to partner with employees on that last mile of nudging.

The benefits of becoming truly engaged in employees' career development can be very fruitful, not only for employees but also for employers who seek continuous efficiencies in their organisations. Employers who complain about employees' engagement should also assess the level of their engagement in their employees' career progression. The bottom line is simple: If we want to truly increase efficiency in our organisations, we should also focus on increasing the level of employers' engagement in employees.

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